



Mr. Joe Gowers
U.S Environmental Protection Agency
290 Broadway, 19th Floor
New York, New York 10007

RE: National Remedy Review Board Recommendations
Ringwood Mines/Landfill Superfund Site
Borough of Ringwood, New Jersey

May 16, 2012

Dear Mr. Gowers,

As the Executive Director of the environmental nonprofit Edison Wetlands Association (EWA), on behalf of our 750 members in New Jersey, I am formally requesting that you forward these recommendations to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) National Remedy Review Board (NRRB). We support the full remediation of the Ringwood Mines/Landfill Superfund Site in Upper Ringwood, New Jersey. Specifically, EWA fully supports the goals and cleanup approach of the USEPA Community Advisory Group (CAG) Resolution (attached) that calls for the full remediation and restoration of Peters Mine Pit, Cannon Mine Pit and the O'Connor Disposal Area.

Furthermore, the CAG and EWA strongly request that all of the toxic waste is removed from the site, and that Ford Motor Company – not the Borough of Ringwood – pay the full cost of the remediation, including natural resources damages. Ford Motor Company is the responsible party and should be held criminally and civilly liable for not only the damage to the environment that they caused, but for the death and illnesses that Ford has inflicted on this unique, ancestral Native American Community.

It is important for the USEPA National Remedy Review Board (NRRB) to fully and carefully consider the following facts before making their recommendation on the remedial approach for the cleanup of Peter's Mine Pit, Cannon Mine Pit and the O'Connor Disposal Area:

1. Ford dumped their toxic poisons on the hardworking families of Upper Ringwood, whose ancestral homes are part of the Ramapough Mountain Indian tribe. They also dumped at the North of Sharp site, as well as along the Ramapo River and many other locations with complete disregard for the damage they caused and the people they have hurt.

At the North of Sharp site, the people who lived there were forced off of their land as result of Ford's disposal practices. The full story of Ford's toxic legacy is featured in an award winning series by the Bergen Record that can be found at www.toxiclegacy.com. EWA recommends the NRRB read this entire series to fully understand the criminality behind Ford's actions. Ford should be entirely responsible to pay for the complete cleanup of the Ringwood Mines/Landfill Superfund Site.

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2. The areas around the Peter's Mine Pit and O'Connor Disposal Area are part of Ringwood State Park and contain the remnants of past mines. These structures, buildings and locations played a significant role in American history. The iron mines and associated structures should be listed on the Federal Historic Registry, as they are artifacts and serve as a reminder of such an important aspect of American history. Iron from these mines was used for the United States Capital Dome and the George Washington Bridge, and was critical in the early success of the United States. These mines, their associated structures, and history have national significance and are a legacy to our nation and its heritage. The families of Upper Ringwood and past generations are part of this legacy. This area, including the mines, should be fully remediated and restored completely. Anything less than full remediation would require deed notices and engineering controls, making complete use for the hundreds of families, hikers and hunters who use these historic paths impossible.
3. The USEPA has identified dioxin, lead and other chemicals in and around the homes of families who live in Upper Ringwood. The USEPA should commit to fully cleaning all known disposal areas and eliminating all possible sources of contamination instead of haggling over how much toxic deadly poison is acceptable to be exposed to the families of Upper Ringwood.

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), Agency for Toxic Substance and Disease Registry (ATSDR) and the New Jersey State Department of Health, there is no safe level of lead and dioxin. Reassessment of dioxin is still under review because it is still considered to be one of the most toxic chemicals known to mankind. The USEPA recently found out there is dioxin in resident's homes after EWA notified the USEPA upon finding out that the attorneys representing Ringwood residents samples came up positive for dioxin from the fires that burned in the mines. This information was only revealed publicly via the informative documentary *Mann v. Ford*, which aired on HBO in July 2011.

The USEPA must further investigate the dioxin which was found in the homes. The sources at the mines and O'Connor disposal areas may have dioxin present as well. There are serious unresolved questions that must be addressed regarding the dioxin, and the lack of testing in the Peter's Mine Pit, Cannon Mine Pit and O'Connor Disposal. Because of this unresolved issue, there should be absolutely no consideration of containment of any waste at this site.

4. As was stated in the USEPA CAG Resolution, the underprivileged Ramapough Mountain Indian Tribe has long suffered premature deaths, rare cancers and autoimmune diseases believed to be linked to toxic waste dumped in their yards decades ago. Though USEPA declared the site clean years earlier, massive mountains of toxic paint sludge still sat out in the open. The Ringwood Mines/Landfill Superfund Site was the first site in the country to be re-listed due to the failures of all levels of government, including the NRRB.

Upon receiving a critical request from Senator Frank Lautenberg to assist the Ramapough Tribe, due to our technical expertise and advocacy skills, EWA began to provide community assistance. It was only after EWA came to provide this assistance, did the USEPA admit the level of their mistakes. This ultimately prompted this site to be relisted in order to fully address the pending human and environmental health threats. Since EWA began helping the residents in late 2004, over 47,000 cubic tons of toxic lead sludge has been removed – six times the amount removed in

the previous 30 years **combined**. Anything less than full cleanup is just not acceptable and should not even be considered.

5. It is well known that the Native American community in Upper Ringwood has cultural and religious practices that they strictly follow. These ancestral practices and rites, including hunting for wild game and gathering local fauna and flora for medicinal and consumption purposes, have been taking place on these mountains long before Ford dumped toxic paint sludge. These religious practices have been infringed upon by both the poison that Ford dumped and the potential for these areas to be permanently fenced in and restricted, limiting access to the land forever. The USEPA has documented that the flora and fauna contain lead and other highly toxic chemicals that are bio-accumulating up the food chain. A link to this report can be found at http://dng.northjersey.com/media_server/tr/2010/12/15sepa/Final_Report.pdf.

The NRRB would be violating the Ramapough's civil and human rights if they utilize this land as permanent storage for Ford toxic poisons. Most importantly, their right to practice their religion will be hindered, which directly conflicts with constitutional and human rights as laid out in the United States Constitution and United Nations Charter on Indigenous Cultures.

6. Over 70,000 community members and stakeholders have signed EWA's petition (<http://www.change.org/petitions/tell-ford-motors-to-remove-all-the-toxic-sludge-they-dumped-in-ringwood>) demanding that Peters Mine Pit and Ringwood State Park must not be used as a storage area for Ford's toxic waste. Every individual who signed this petition should be considered as stakeholders, and the NRRB should carefully consider the rights of every taxpayer, voter and family who live, work and recreate in New York and New Jersey, who are affected by this decision.
7. Equally as important, this area serves as the headwaters for the Wanaque Reservoir, a vital drinking water resource for over 2 million people. Protecting drinking water reservoirs and their headwaters is a USEPA priority due to numerous droughts and water shortages that put this reservoir at great risk, which is why the federal government places great effort on its protection.

To consider anything but full removal from these unique, historical and environmental resources would make the USEPA no better than Ford Motor Company, who has expressed clear disregard for the rights of these indigenous people and the environment they have damaged. No amount of money Ford spends on public relations, green washing or even cleanup efforts at this site, will ever replace the lives of the people who died here, like Collin Milligan, the boy featured in *Mann v. Ford* whom the community had to bury at such a young age.

The USEPA and NRRB must make it clear to Ford that the failures of the past must be corrected. If the NRRB allows use of these ancestral mountains for long term disposal of highly toxic chemicals, the USEPA will condemn the families of Upper Ringwood to annihilation. Anything less than full remediation will also make a mockery of the Superfund program and all of the unwavering hard work put forth from each individual who has fought to clean up this area and bring justice to this community. Many of the residents who began this struggle to protect the Native American community and the families who live here have died fighting for a full cleanup.

Only **complete** remediation of all three disposal areas, Peter's Mine Pit, Cannon Mine Pit and the O'Connor Disposal Area, as well as any other disposal area, will provide some level of justice and closure for the immense tragedy that Ford has blighted this community with. The NRRB and USEPA must remove all paint sludge and other waste and restore this Native American land to the state it once was – a beautiful, open, flourishing land that the natives can fully enjoy.

Thank you for taking our recommendations into consideration. If you have any questions, I can be reached at 732-321-1300 or via email at rspiegel@edisonwetlands.org.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert Spiegel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Robert Spiegel
Executive Director
Edison Wetlands Association